

Dear Chairman McCrory, Chairman Sanchez, Ranking Member Berthel, Ranking Member McCarty, Vice Chairs, and distinguished members of the committee,

My name is Kara Nelson Baekey, and I am writing as a long-time resident of Norwalk, CT. I am a proud parent of two teenagers, one of whom went through Norwalk Public Schools K - 8 and another who is currently a sophomore at P-TECH (having started in NPS in kindergarten). I am also an At-Large member of Norwalk's Board of Education.

I am writing here to express my deep support of H.B. 5283, An Act Concerning the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula. For the last 20 years, I have watched as our schools have not had enough funding to cover even basic needs. Year over year, NPS has been short funded. By the city as per BOE funding requests, and by the state as per ECS formulas. Our CHILDREN have bore the brunt, and it needs to stop.

Prior to the pandemic, Norwalk struggled with financing even basic operational needs. Now, given the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are at an even greater disadvantage. Given the disinterest in funding the BOE's requested 9.1% budgetary increase for 2022-2023, on the heels of a year where a 0% budget increase was seen, I am gravely concerned about the fiscal cliff that looms for our city upon the termination of the ESSER funds.

NOW is the time for the state to rectify the long held disparities in the cost per pupil spending for Norwalk (\$19,770 vs. \$22,000 for Wilton & Darien). NOW is the time to make sure that we do not have to CUT STAFF - including teachers, academic support, paraeducators, social workers, and counselors.

Please vote in support of H.B. 5283, for Norwalk's kids, and Norwalk's future.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kara Nelson Baekey
69 Melbourne Road
Norwalk, CT 06851

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